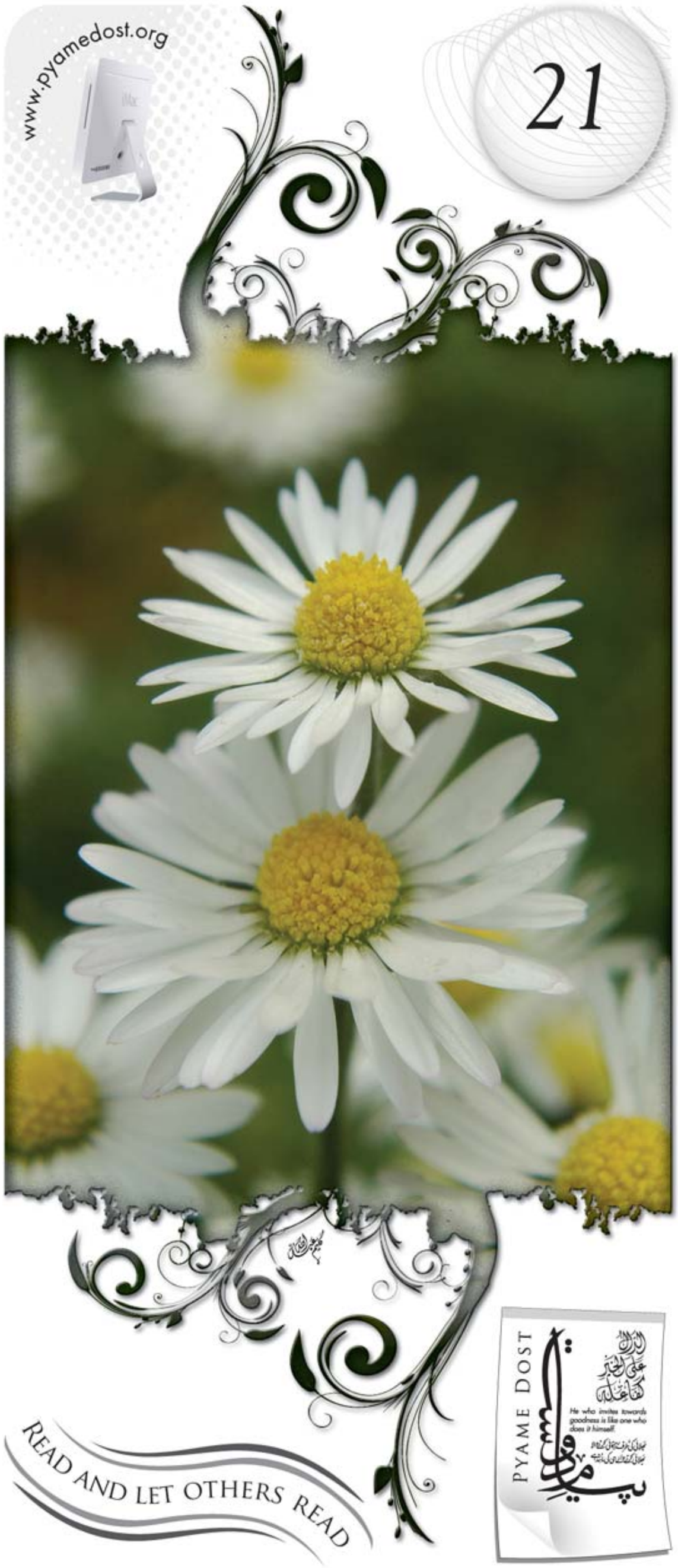

Rights of People

In the Light of Quran & Sunnah

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Allah's Messenger (SAW) said: *"Do you know who is poor?" They (the Companions of the Prophet) said: "A poor man amongst us is one who has neither dirham with him nor wealth."* He (the Prophet) said: *"The poor of my Ummah would be he who would come on the Day of Resurrection with prayers and fasts and zakah but (he would find himself bankrupt on that day as he would have exhausted his funds of virtues) since he hurled abuses upon others, brought calumny against others and unlawfully consumed the wealth of others and shed the blood of others and beat others, and his virtues would be credited to the account of one (who suffered at his hand). And if his good deeds fall short to clear the account, then his sins would be entered in (his account) and he would be thrown in the Hell-Fire."* **(Muslim)**

This means that we must not only do good deeds, but that it is equally important to safeguard them. In addition to being obedient to Allah we must be sincere well-wishers for Allah's creation. So mentioned here are just some of the rights others have on us. We need to try our best to get to know our responsibilities and rather than focusing on claiming our rights from others, we should be more concerned about giving them theirs.

Some Basic Things

- *"A Muslim is he from whose hand and tongue the Muslims are safe."* **(Muslim)**

Islam literally means peace, safety and security. So what kind of a Muslim would harm a fellow Muslim with his hand or tongue?

- The Prophet (SAW) said: *"Do not be people without minds of your own, saying that if others treat you well, you will treat them well and that if they do wrong, you will do wrong; but accustom yourselves to do good if people do good and not to do wrong if they do evil."* **(Tirmidhi.)**
- To be fair and just in giving people their rights is extremely important e.g. it is not correct to neglect one's duty to one's wife and children and be concerned only about giving the parents their rights; neither is it correct to be so influenced by the love for one's wife and children that their rights are given at the expense of the rights of one's parents and siblings. Adl (Justice and fairness) means to be balanced in one's approach. Fairness is enjoined in Islam time and time again and although the reason given in the Quran for the permission for more than one nikah (marriage) is primarily out of concern for the orphans, but we have been told:

"But if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with more than one wife) then only one." **(4:3)**

- People's rights are often usurped when the other party is considered weak. However it is important to remind ourselves that in both our power and the relative weakness of others is our test.

Narrated Abu Mas'ud al-Ansari (RAA) that: *"I was beating my slave with a whip when I heard the voice of the Prophet (SAW) behind me and he was saying: 'Bear in mind, Abu Mas'ud, verily Allah has more dominance upon you than you have upon your slave.' I (then) said:' I will never beat my servant in future.'"* **(Muslim).**

- *"No obedience for evil deeds, obedience is required only in what is good."* **(Bukhari)**
- Allah has specified the order of relationships and this should be kept in mind when giving people their due rights. This means that even if one is a fountain of generosity for others, the generosity has no value in Allah's sight if one has not given the near ones their rights first.
- Islam creates in a person the desire and spirit to serve and benefit others. A believer is meant to be a giver rather than a receiver and if he is not able to help others, he should at least try to refrain from causing them problems or making things difficult for them.
- According to a Hadith, Hell became incumbent on a woman whose

cat died because she did not give it food or drink, while Paradise will be the reward of a man who removed a thorny branch of a tree from the way. Just imagine what a sin it is to cause distress to humankind and how reward worthy it is to help them in their difficulties and make things easy for them.

- *"If anyone deprives an heir of his inheritance, Allah will deprive him of his inheritance in Paradise on the Day of Resurrection."* **(Ibn e Majah)**
- Pride and arrogance is normally the root cause of not giving people their rights. About the arrogant, the Prophet (SAW) said: *"The proud will be resurrected like specks on the Day of Resurrection in the form of men, covered all round with ignominy."* **(Tirmidhi)**
- The real goal of all our striving should be to please Allah and He judges us according to our intentions and efforts. So if our intentions are pure and we do our best, Allah will be well- pleased with us even if the other person is not satisfied with our efforts.

The Rights of the Parents

After Allah's rights on us, parents are foremost on the list when it comes to giving people their rights. Allah tells in the Quran:

"Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt nor repel them but address them in terms of honor. And out of kindness lower to them the wing of humility and say: "My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood." Your Lord knows best what is in your hearts: if you do deeds of righteousness verily He is Most Forgiving to those who turn to Him again and again (in true penitence)." **(17:23-25)**

- The Prophet (SAW) said: *"Let him be humbled into dust; let him be humbled into dust. He who sees either of his parents during their old age or he sees both of them, but he does not enter Paradise."* **(Muslim)**
- The Prophet (SAW) was asked: *"Is there any kindness left that I can do to my parents after their death?"* He (SAW) replied: *"Yes, you can invoke blessings on them, ask forgiveness for them, carry out their final instructions after their death, join ties of relatio nship which are dependent on them and honour their friends."* **(Abu Dawood)**

Although we may be justified in our grievances against our parents, we must remind ourselves that Allah has stressed on good treatment and obedience to parents even if they are non-Muslims. However, obedience to parents is not permissible if they ask us to do kufr (disbelief) or shirk (associating partners with Allah) or ask us to disobey Allah's commands. **(Quran- 31:15)**

The Rights of Children

- They should be given an Islamic upbringing and raised on halaal (permissible) earnings.
- *"O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones."* **(Quran- 66:6)** It is obligatory for every person that he should try to save his family from the fire of Hell. Virtuous offspring are a source of peace and comfort for their parents in their lifetime and a continuous act of charity for them after death.
- *"A father gives his son nothing better than a good education."* **(Tirmidhi)**
- *"If anyone has a female child, and does not bury her alive, or slight her, or prefer his children (i.e. the male ones) to her, Allah will bring him into Paradise."* **(Abu Dawood)**
- To instill the correct values in their children and raise them according to the teachings of Islam, it is important for the parents themselves to set the right example and live according to these teachings. Additionally, parents should not spoil their children through overindulgence, nor should they be too harsh with them. They should also make frequent supplications to Allah to bestow upon them good in this world and the next.

The Rights of the Wife

This was the period after Hijrah (migration to Medina). The Prophet (SAW) wakes up one night and very quietly, gets up from bed and even more quietly opens the door of his chamber and lets himself out of his house to visit the graveyard of Baqi to pray for forgiveness for the believers. The Mother of Believers describes his every movement as "quietly". He avoids making any unnecessary noise so that he should not disturb his wife's sleep. Only a person with such a level of excellence in dealing with others had the right to say:"

"The best of you are those who are best to their wives." **(Tirmidhi)**

It is not about who is the most popular or has the best reputation amongst friends or outsiders, but who proves to be the most patient and forbearing with his family and treats them with gentleness. The wife is not a slave, nor is her husband's home meant to be a prison for her.

Allah tells us in the Quran how wives should be treated:

"Live with them on a footing of kindness and equity." **(4:19)**

This order is not just for a particular occasion or stage of life; it is applicable in youth and old age, whether she is beautiful or not, whether she is wealthy in her own right or not. She deserves to be shown respect, has a right to share in her husband's income and should be given the due recognition & status in his house.

"And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them according to what is equitable." **(Quran - 2: 228)**

If the husband needs money, the wife too has similar needs. If he needs to rest, she too needs rest; if he feels angry, she too is not without feelings and emotions; if he wants to be given respect, she too does not like being insulted. If he wants to be the master, she too was not born to be a slave.

"And among His Signs is this that He created for you mates from among yourselves that you may dwell in tranquility with them and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts); verily in that are Signs for those who reflect." **(Quran-30:21)**. This means that the relationship between a husband and wife is not that of master and slave, but it is a bond of love and understanding. The real purpose of marriage is to make life as pleasant and enjoyable as possible through a relationship based on sincerity and affection, but where such a situation is not possible Allah tells us in the Quran:

"On the contrary, live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If you take a dislike to them it may be that you dislike a thing and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good." **(4:19)**

While the husband is the head of the family and the one in charge of it, we have been told how he should use this authority. The Prophet (SAW) said:

"You are responsible for providing them with their food and clothing in a fitting manner." **(Muslim)**

- The mahr (bridal gift) actually symbolises a man's commitment to bear financial responsibility for his wife's maintenance. The amount of mahr given should be according to the husband's means and in the Quran we have been told that this can be a qintaar (treasure or great amount). The mahr is a wife's right and it should be paid to her as soon as possible.

The Rights of the Husband

In the small kingdom that a home represents, a wife should adopt an attitude of cooperation and obedience to her husband. She should safeguard his property, secrets, reputation and dignity. **(Quran- 4:34)**

- *"After fear of Allah a believer gains nothing better for himself than a good wife who obeys him if he gives her a command, pleases him if he looks at her, is true to him if he adjures her to do something, and is sincere towards him regarding her person and his property if he is absent."* **(Ibn e Majah)**
- In accordance with his means and at the same time staying within the Islamically permissible limits, she should make herself attractive for her husband. She should also keep his likes and dislikes in mind when spending

his money, in addition to maintaining an attitude of gratefulness to him.

- *"If a woman dies while her husband was pleased with her, she will enter Paradise."* **(Tirmidhi)**

The Rights of Relatives

'Sila rahmi' (maintaining ties of kinship) means being good to relatives.

A man asked the Prophet (SAW), *"O Allah's Apostle! Who is more entitled to be treated with the best companionship by me?"* The Prophet (SAW) replied: *"Your mother, next your mother, next your mother, and then comes your father, and then your relatives in order of relationship."* **(Abu Dawood)**

This means that a person's parents, then his wife and children, brothers and sisters, in that order, are the foremost in the line of relatives followed by those who are closest in relationship. The closer the relationship, the higher the priority.

- *"The word 'Ar-Rahm' (womb) derives its name from Ar-Rahman (one of the names of Allah) and Allah said: 'I will keep good relation with the one who will keep good relation with you, (womb, i.e. kith and kin) and sever the relation with him who will sever the relation with you, (womb, i.e. kith and kin).'"* **(Bukhari)**
- *"The person who severs the bond of kinship will not enter Paradise."* **(Bukhari)**
- *"Sadaqah (charity) given to a poor man is just sadaqah, but when given to a relative it serves a double purpose, being both sadaqah and a connecting link."* **(Tirmidhi)**
- *"He who wishes to have his provision enlarged and his term of life prolonged should treat his relatives well."* **(Bukhari)**
- *"If a person provides for and looks after two or three daughters, or two or three sisters, until they separate from him (by getting married or by dying) or until he dies and leaves them behind, then he and I will be like these two in Paradise"* and to show what he meant by *"these two"* the Prophet (SAW) pointed to his index and middle finger. **(Ahmad)**
- *"So give what is due to kindred the needy and the wayfarer. That is best for those who seek the Countenance of Allah and it is they who will prosper."* **(Quran-30:38)** This means that giving to relatives is not charity but their right upon you and it is no favour that you are doing them.
- Maintaining a good relationship with relatives may require a lot of patience and tolerance and the ability to overlook their mistakes and forgive them. When problems exist between family members, irrespective of who is at fault, we should resolve to obey Allah and His prophet's commands. If we are at fault, then it is even more important to make amends. If the other party is at fault, then despite being blameless, it is more pleasing to Allah that we should initiate the process of putting things right as soon as possible. According to the Prophet (SAW) it is not permissible for a Muslim to have estranged relations with another Muslim for more than three days. *"The better of the two is the one who starts greeting the other."* **(Bukhari)**
- A person said: *"Allah's Messenger, I have relatives with whom I try to have close relationship, but they sever (this relation). I treat them well, but they treat me ill. I am sweet to them but they are harsh towards me."* Upon this he (the Prophet) said: *"If it is so as you say, then you in fact throw hot ashes (upon their faces) and there would always remain with you on behalf of Allah (an Angel to support you) who would keep you dominant over them so long as you adhere to this (path of righteousness)."* **(Muslim)**

After being bestowed the honour of a helper to support him, what more can a person want?

The Rights of Neighbours

Due to the proximity, a neighbour can be a better companion than any others in both our good and bad times. It is also due to this very proximity that there is a greater chance of hurting or aggravating him.

If a person is not only a neighbour, but also a relative, then he has the most

rights on us. This is followed by our Muslim neighbour and then our non-Muslim one. In the case of having more than one neighbour, the neighbour whose door is closest has greater rights on us.

- *"Gabreil kept on commending the neighbour to me so that I thought he would make him an heir."* **(Bukhari)**
- *"I swear by God he does not believe, I swear by God he does not believe, I swear by God he does not believe. The one from whose injurious conduct his neighbour is not safe will not enter Paradise."* **(Muslim)**
- *"A believer is not the one who eats his fill when his neighbour beside him is hungry."* **(Baihaqi)**
- In Islam we have been instructed to be as good as we can to even the "companion by your side" i.e. those who are in our company for a short time, whether it is a fellow traveller, someone sitting by our side in a gathering, or a fellow customer in a shop. **(Quran- 4:36)**

The Rights of the Muslim Brotherhood

- *"There are six rights that a Muslim has over another Muslim. If you meet him, extend greetings of peace to him; if he invites you (to his house, for a meal, etc), then accept his invitation; if he seeks your advice, then advise him; if he sneezes and then praises Allah, then ask Allah to have mercy upon him (by saying to him: 'May Allah have mercy upon you'); if he becomes sick, then visit him; and if he dies, then follow his funeral procession."* **(Bukhari)**
- *"Beware of suspicion, for it is the worst of false tales and don't look for the other's faults and don't spy and don't hate each other, and don't desert (cut your relations with) one another. O Allah's slaves, be brothers!"* **(Bukhari)**
- *"He does not belong to us who does not show mercy to our young ones and respect to our old ones."* **(Tirmidhi)**
- *"He who appropriated the right of a Muslim by (swearing a false) oath, Allah would make Hell-fire necessary for him and would declare Paradise forbidden for him."* A person asked: *"Messenger of Allah, even if it is something insignificant?"* The Prophet (SAW) replied: *"(Yes) even if it is the twig of the arak tree."* **(Muslim)**

The Rights of Widows & Orphans

It has been preferred for a widow that she remarries and once again enters the fold of protection, security, and comfort of which she has been deprived due to her husband's death. However, if out of concern for her children's welfare or for some other important reason she does not remarry but leads a chaste and respectable life, then she has been permitted to make this choice. Additionally, after the completion of her iddat (the mourning period with its accompanying restrictions following her husband's death) she has the full right to live a comfortable and happy life.

- *"The one who looks after and works for a widow and for a poor person, is like a warrior fighting for Allah's Cause or like a person who fasts during the day and prays all the night."* **(Bukhari)**
- *"Those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans eat up a fire into their own bodies: they will soon be enduring a blazing fire!"* **(Quran-4:10)**
- *"I and the one who looks after an orphan will be like this in Paradise,"* and the Prophet (SAW) was showing his middle and index fingers and separating them. **(Bukhari)**

Rights of the Poor, Needy, Helpless and the Calamity-Stricken

- On seeing a crippled beggar on the streets or some other helpless person, we should try to visualize ourselves in the same position. This will bring about a feeling of gratitude to Allah for having saved us from such a fate. We should remind ourselves that this is a test from Allah who is watching to see how we will treat those less privileged than us.
- *"He who alleviates the suffering of a brother from the affections of the world, Allah will alleviate his affections from the sufferings of the Day of Resurrection. He who finds relief for one who is hard pressed, Allah will make things easy for him in the Hereafter, and he who conceals (the faults) of a Muslim,*

Allah would conceal his faults in the world and in the Hereafter. Allah is at the back of a servant so long as the servant is at the back of his brother." **(Muslim)**

"Many a person with dishevelled hair and covered with dust is turned away from the doors (whereas he is held in such a high esteem by Allah) that if he were to adjure in the name of Allah (about anything) Allah would fulfill that." **(Muslim)**

From this we learn that those people who look down on the poor and needy are truly shortsighted. It so frequently happens that once it is known that a person is about to become powerful, people immediately start flattering and giving him attention in the hope that he will benefit them when he acquires his new position. But it is strange that these pious but poor people who have so much standing with Allah are not considered worthy of attention. It is possible that the poor man, who is the picture of humility and deprivation here, may become a great king in the Hereafter and then we will wish that we had befriended him. If he can become a source of honour for us in the Hereafter, why should we not establish a bond of respect, love and compassion with him in this very world?

"When you smile in your brother's face, or enjoin what is reputable, or forbid what is objectionable, or direct someone who has lost his way, or help a man who has bad eyesight, or remove stones, thorns and bones from the road, or pour water from your bucket into your brother's, it counts to you as charity." **(Tirmidhi)**

So we should try to help the less-privileged and calamity-stricken people as much as we can and we will, In sha Allah, be saved from calamities in both this world and the next.

The Rights of the Ruler and the Ruled

"If any ruler having the authority to rule Muslim subjects dies while he is deceiving them, Allah will forbid Paradise for him." **(Bukhari)**

"A Muslim has to listen to and obey (the order of his ruler) whether he likes it or not, as long as his orders do not involve one in disobedience (to Allah), but if an act of disobedience (to Allah) is imposed one should not listen to it or obey it." **(Bukhari)**

The Rights of the Sick

"Verily, when a Muslim visits his sick Muslim brother, he is, as it were, in one of the gardens of Paradise (enjoying its ripe fruits) until he returns to his home." **(Tirmidhi)**

The Rights of Debtors and Creditors

Debts, be they for small or large amounts, should be contracted in writing, specifying the repayment period in order to avoid problems later on. **(Quran -2:282)**

"All the sins of a martyr are forgiven except debt." **(Muslim)**

"He who grants a respite to one who is in straitened circumstances or remits his debt will be taken by Allah under His protection." **(Muslim)**

The Rights of Servants, Workers & Employees

"One who treats badly those under his authority will not enter Paradise." **(Tirmidhi)**

"Give the hireling his wages before his sweat dries." **(Ibn e Majah)**

"I shall be an adversary on the Day of Resurrection for a man who hired a servant and after receiving full service from him, did not give him his wages." **(Bukhari)**

The Rights of Dhimmis

Non-Muslims living in an Islamic state are called *'dhimmis'* because the Islamic state has taken the responsibility for protecting their lives, property and honour. In addition to these rights, they have the freedom to follow their religion.

"Whoever killed a Mu'ahid (a person who is granted the pledge of protection by the Muslims) shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise though its

fragrance can be smelt at a distance of forty years (of travelling)." **(Bukhari)**

"Beware, if anyone wrongs a contracting man, or diminishes his right, or forces him to work beyond his capacity, or takes from him anything without his consent, I shall plead for him on the Day of Judgement." **(Abu Dawood)**

The Rights of the Human Brotherhood

In Islam, all human beings are to be treated well and deserve our help, sympathy and compassion. The life, property and honour of every person, irrespective of whether he is a Muslim or non-Muslim, is considered inviolable. All humanity is the progeny of Adam (AS) and hence, as brothers, they should be sincere well wishers for each other.

"All creatures are God's ward, and those dearest to God are the ones who treat His wards kindly." **(Baihaqi)**

The Way of the Prophet(SAW) and his companions:

Every chapter of the life of the Prophet (SAW) is replete with stories of benevolence and the highest standard of good treatment with others.

A man said to the Prophet (SAW), *"Messenger of Allah, I have slaves who lie to me, deceive me and disobey me, and I revile and beat them. How do I stand with respect to them?"* He replied, *"On the Day of Resurrection account will be taken of the extent of their deceit, disobedience and lying towards you, and of the punishment you administered to them. If your punishment of them was in accordance with their offences, its being exactly right will count neither for you nor against you. If your punishment of them was less than their offence deserved it will be something extra to your credit. But if your punishment of them was greater than their offences, deserved requital will be taken from you on their behalf for the excess."* The man went aside and began to shout and weep and after a while said, *"Messenger of Allah, I find nothing better for myself and these men than to separate from them. I call you to witness that they are all free."* **(Tirmidhi)**

LASTLY

"None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself." **(Bukhari)**

Is there anyone of us who does not desire good things - well being, peace, safety and security, recognition, honour, a good reputation, material comforts, peace of mind, a problem-free life and protection from calamities in both this world and the next? Is there anyone who does not want to be successful when he passes through the different stages both before and after death? The person who desires all this for his Muslim brothers and sisters just as much as he desires it for himself is a true believer. A true believer is also one who cares and loves his fellow Muslim, respects him, is his sincere well-wisher, does not harm him with his hand or tongue and can be relied upon for help at times of distress. If the relationship between his fellow Muslims is strained, then a true believer helps to put things right between them. If he sees a Muslim treading the paths of sin, he tries his utmost to stop him from straying and helps him to stay on the straight path.

This is what we must do, because if we truly love someone we cannot possibly bear to see them become deserving of any kind of punishment, be it in this world or the Hereafter.

We pray to Allah that he should bestow upon us the ability to increase our knowledge and to act upon it. Aameen.

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